

# **An Outline Communications Strategy for RPA**

## 1.0 **Scope of paper**

1.1 This paper sets out a communications strategy to support the implementation of the RPA programme. It is intended to provide corporate direction and facilitate the development of individual communications plans at departmental and programme level.

## 2.0 **Communications aim and objectives**

2.1 The overall aim of the strategy is to:

- Support the reform programme through timely and interactive internal and external communications that creates an understanding of and commitment to the reform programme.

2.2 The following objectives have been established:

- Engage all key internal and external audiences impacted by RPA.
- Ensure that internal and external stakeholders understand the vision, timetables and key activities, who it affects and what it means for them.
- Exploit innovative and existing communications channels and techniques to maximise awareness of and understanding of the reform programme.
- Establish by July 2006 a public sector communications sub-group to ensure an integrated and consistent approach to communications across the public sector.

- Monitor the development of communications structures in the new organisations to ensure they support a corporate approach to communications.

### 3.0 **Message delivery – leadership**

- 3.1 The Review of Public Administration represents the largest change programme ever undertaken in the public sector in Northern Ireland. Communication activities must focus on demonstrating the value of RPA in terms of improved public services and, internally, must deal with staff concerns.
- 3.2 An integrated communication strategy requires strong leadership to ensure the consistent delivery of communication activities. The RPA steering committee provides leadership for the overall programme. To ensure a consistent approach to communications across the wider public sector a communications sub-group should be established under the leadership of the Executive Information Service, with representatives from each sector of the RPA programme. The role of the group will be to co-ordinate communication activities, ensure a consistent approach across the public sector, promote best practice, identify any communications gaps and provide feedback to the steering group.
- 3.3 Each department must have a communications champion who will be visible and provide leadership to managers so that relevant information is delivered in a timely and consistent manner to staff and other key stakeholders.
- 3.4 A key to the successful delivery of the communications strategy will be an understanding of what the target audience wants to hear. In the case of staff, the communication activities must answer the “What about me?” question. How will the reform affect or benefit me? To facilitate this, communications must deliver simple, explicit and easily understood messages about the reform of public administration in Northern Ireland.

3.5 The following are recommended as the core messages:

RPA will

- transform the delivery of government and public services with power being exercised as close to people as possible;
- deliver a more efficient and competitive government, ensuring taxpayers' money is spent on frontline services; and
- strengthening the role of local government.

3.6 In communicating with staff the focus will be on:

- communicating effectively with all staff so that they know what is expected of them and how the changes will impact on them; and
- ensuring all staff are provided with relevant and timely information about how their organisation and job may be affected.

3.7 Staff will be informed and consulted about RPA in a variety of ways including team briefing, departmental newsletters, consultations through TUS channels and websites. Of equal importance will be the requirement to establish feedback mechanisms so that staff can ask questions and raise issues of concern.

3.8 Each sector must develop its own communication strategy linked to the core messages but with more detailed messages tailored to their own audiences. DHSSPS has already done this with messages setting out the rationale for change and dealing with staff concerns. Specifically, staff will want clear and unambiguous messages about the impact on their organisation and their job.

## 4.0 **Stakeholder analysis**

4.1 Key to the delivery of RPA communications will be the delivery of the right messages to the right people at the right time. This will require a mix of a corporate communications plan and individual sector plans targeted at health, local government, education and the other bodies. The messages, audiences and timescales will vary and it is important that each sector develops and implements communication action plans for their specific audiences.

4.2 Annex 1 sets out a high level stakeholder matrix for RPA communications. The matrix outlines the key stakeholders, their information requirements, communications mechanisms and lead responsibility. It demonstrates the differing information requirements of each audience and underlines the need for a tailored and segmented approach to communications. A more detailed stakeholder analysis based on the specific communications requirements of each area should be developed as part of each of the sector communications plans. These plans must be sufficiently flexible to respond to the changing communications needs of stakeholders during the implementation of the reform programme.

## 5.0 **Immediate communications challenges and next steps**

5.1 We are at the beginning of an important but complex change management programme. The following immediate steps are recommended to ensure the momentum built around the initial RPA announcement is not lost:

- Communication plans for health (already completed), education and local government should be completed by the end of June.

- The initial communications to NICS staff should be followed up by a further newsletter/team briefing during July.
- A new internal communication team has been appointed and will be in place by 1 July. This team will support the reform programme and help co-ordinate communication across the NICS.
- An RPA communications co-ordinating group will be established in July. EIS will chair the group, which will report to the RPA steering committee. The group purpose will be to ensure a co-ordinated approach to communications. Departments will retain responsibility for communications within their area of responsibility.
- A key reform programme speech in mid-July will provide an opportunity to demonstrate progress and commitment to the implementation of RPA.
- EIS will develop a co-ordinated 'rolling' programme of announcements on the implementation of RPA.

## 6.0 **Evaluation and review**

- 6.1 Ongoing evaluation and review will ensure that the communications activities keep pace with the change programme and remain focused on the relevant issues. The communications co-ordinating group will have an important role in monitoring the effectiveness of the internal and external communications.

## 7.0 **Recommendation**

That the outline approach is approved, together with the next steps set out in 5.0.

Stakeholder	Information Requirements	Mechanisms	Responsibility
<p>Secretary of State/ Ministers</p> <p>Staff - civil servants - Health staff - Education staff - Local government staff - Other</p> <p>PSC</p> <p>Trade Unions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of legislative programme</li> <li>• Progress reports on implementation</li> <li>• Political/public opinion on implementation</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timetable for implementation</li> <li>• Impact on jobs</li> <li>• Impact on the role of their organisation</li> <li>• HR issues</li> <li>• Sources for advice/information</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timetable for implementation</li> <li>• Recruitment/impact on jobs</li> <li>• HR issues</li> <li>• Consultation with staff</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timetable for implementation</li> <li>• Impact on jobs</li> <li>• HR issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submissions and briefings</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted messages relevant to each sector</li> <li>• Line managers</li> <li>• Emails</li> <li>• Team briefing</li> <li>• Q&amp;A</li> <li>• News letters/staff magazines</li> <li>• Websites</li> <li>• Roadshows</li> </ul> <p>Meetings/briefings</p> <p>Meetings/briefings</p>	<p>HOCS/RPA team</p> <p>Communications teams within each sector</p> <p>RPA team Permanent Secretaries</p> <p>RPA team Personnel Directors</p>

Stakeholder	Information Requirements	Mechanisms	Responsibility
Political representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress with legislation</li> <li>• Boundary issues</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities of new bodies</li> <li>• Impact on local jobs and services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefings</li> <li>• Bulletins</li> <li>• Websites</li> <li>• Media</li> </ul>	Ministers RPA team Permanent Secretaries
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on local services</li> <li>• Location and access to new services</li> <li>• Timetable for changes</li> <li>• Jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media</li> <li>• PR</li> <li>• Websites</li> </ul>	RPA communications team/ EIS
Private sector/trade organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on cost of government</li> <li>• Opportunities for business</li> <li>• Implementation timetable</li> <li>• Location issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefings</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Websites</li> </ul>	RPA communications teams
Professional organisations, eg doctors, nurses, teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation timetable</li> <li>• New management arrangements</li> <li>• Impact on jobs</li> <li>• HR issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefings</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Websites</li> <li>• Staff bulletins</li> </ul>	RPA communications teams

Stakeholder	Information Requirements	Mechanisms	Responsibility
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation timetable</li> <li>• New structures/boundaries</li> <li>• Impact on jobs</li> <li>• New arrangements – access to services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Announcements</li> <li>• Briefings</li> <li>• Websites</li> </ul>	EIS/Communications teams
Voluntary/Community Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation timetable</li> <li>• Impact on existing services provided by this sector</li> <li>• Location and organisation of new structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Announcements</li> <li>• Seminars</li> <li>• Briefings</li> <li>• Websites</li> </ul>	Communications teams